

## **CHAPTER 12**

### **ST. LUCIE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT**

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**ST. LUCIE COUNTY  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT**

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## **ST. LUCIE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Economic Development Element is an optional element of St. Lucie County's Comprehensive Plan. This element addresses general economic issues facing St. Lucie County today and identifies potential future economic issues. Although this is not a required element, economic development is important enough to be considered in the planning of St. Lucie County's future. A plan that provides direction for the future will: assist government and developers in informed investment decision-making; diversify and promote a more sustainable tax base; protect the integrity of real estate investments; protect against overbuilding and urban sprawl; protect against unnecessary losses of resource land; protect against losses of open space and natural systems; stimulate job growth in the targeted industries such as aerospace/engineering, marine, biotech/medical, pharmaceutical, agricultural, aquaculture, electronics, tourism, as well as cultural and arts industries; and improve global competitiveness.

The Economic Development Element recognizes that St. Lucie County needs to act in coordination with neighboring municipalities and private enterprise, because of the economic relationships that exist between geographic areas and the private sector. This Element is a starting point and the base of the economic development tool box. The Economic Development Element describes the current conditions in the county, selects a direction for economic development and develops goals, objectives, and policies to advance the plan for economic development.

### **A. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HISTORY**

In 1993, the U.S. Economic Development Administration awarded St. Lucie County a grant to fund a countywide economic plan. The result of this effort was the St. Lucie County Economic Development Base Study, which was completed in 1995. This document quantifies local economic conditions to more effectively set a course of action. Subsequently, the county went through a visioning process, which resulted in a document called "Vision St. Lucie", which is attached as Exhibit A. These two documents provide much of the information included in this element. The Community Vision developed for Fort Pierce, Port St. Lucie, St. Lucie Village and the unincorporated areas recommends:

1. An education system and business partnership that provides a work force competitive in the global economy;
2. An uncompromised quality of life for all ages and cultures to live, learn, work, and play;
3. A public/private partnership that creates a political and business climate conducive to economic development and high quality job growth while protecting our natural environment;
4. Infrastructure that supports the education, quality of life, and economic development visions;
5. Streamlined government with a minimum of duplication of services;
6. A public/private partnership providing the leadership to achieve the shared vision for education, quality of life, economic development, infrastructure, and

government.

**B. GEOGRAPHIC SETTING**

St. Lucie County is one of the fastest growing areas in the United States. Located about two-thirds of the way down the Atlantic Coast of Florida, St. Lucie County's 626 square miles contain three municipalities: Ft. Pierce, Port St. Lucie, and St. Lucie Village.

One of the greatest influences upon the mobility and economic development of St. Lucie County is the highway network. The proximity of Interstate 95 and the Florida Turnpike, combined with US Highway #1, SR A-1-A, and the St. Lucie County International Airport, provide access to markets throughout Florida, the United States, South America, and the world. As economies globalize, St. Lucie County's linkages with other geographic areas become more evident and more important. It is therefore necessary, to view the county's economy not as an isolated unit, but within a broader context.

St. Lucie County also enjoys a reputation as vacation destination with the theme: ■St. Lucie County is the pure Florida ■ still uncrowded, still unspoiled. • Among the many attractions for residents and visitors alike are 21 miles of beach, the Indian River Lagoon, the 500 acre Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution, Smithsonian Marine Institution, canoeing on the St. Lucie River, or visiting one of the many museums in the county.

**C. POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT**

The county's population as of early 1997 was estimated at a total of 175,458, with 62,658 living in the unincorporated area. Over the next 5 to 6 years St. Lucie County is projected to grow to a population of 213,300 (see Table 12-1). The increase in population results in an increase in labor force. The Florida Department of Labor reported an increase of 1674 in labor force (employable persons between 18 and 65 years of age) from 1997 to 1998, with an increase in employment of 2078. This indicates that theoretically all of the new labor force was accommodated by new jobs, and that an additional 404 jobs were created to reduce the average annual unemployment rate from 10.7 percent in 1997 to 9.9 percent in 1998. However, lack of high paying employment opportunities has lead St. Lucie County to have a lower average earnings per job rate than the State or its neighboring counties (see Table 12-2). This is partly due to the disproportionately high number of low paying retail and service sector jobs.

<b>TABLE 12-1</b>				
<b>Population Projections for St. Lucie County, Florida, 2000 through 2020 - Medium Projection</b>				
<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2020</b>
192,000	213,300	233,400	254,500	276,500

Source: Florida Statistical Abstract 1999, Bureau of Economic & Business Research, University of Florida

<b>TABLE 12-2</b>	
<b>1997 County Income Average Earnings Per Job</b>	
Statewide	\$27,511
St. Lucie County	\$24,097
Martin County	\$25,301
Indian River County	\$24,920

Source: Florida Statistical Abstract 1999, Bureau of Economic & Business Research, University of Florida

<b>TABLE 12-3</b>									
<b>Employment by Industry Group St. Lucie County Florida, 1998</b>									
agriculture	construction	manufacturing	transportation	wholesale	retail	fire	service	public administration	other
5225	2751	2602	2581	1900	10104	2256	12286	9195	206
1.70%	5.60%	5.30%	5.30%	3.90%	20.70%	4.60%	25.10%	18.80%	< 1%
total employment all groups							48,860		

Source: Florida Statistical Abstract 1999, Bureau of Economic & Business Research, University of Florida

#### D. EXISTING LAND USE

Currently the county has 5,398 acres zoned for industrial uses, and 4,377 acres zoned for commercial uses.

<b>TABLE 12-4 Industrial/Commercial Acreage in St. Lucie County</b>				
<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Acres zoned industrial</b>	<b>Acres zoned commercial</b>	<b>Acres designated mixed use</b>	<b>Number of Industrial Parks</b>
St. Lucie County <sup>(1)</sup>	8,639	3,208	15,339*	3
City of Ft. Pierce <sup>(2)</sup>	504	1,712	193	1
City of Port St. Lucie <sup>(3)</sup>	666	1,048	0	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,809</b>	<b>5,968</b>	<b>15,532*</b>	<b>8</b>
Sources: (1) St. Lucie County Planning Department 1999 (2) Ft. Pierce Planning Department 1999 (3) Port St. Lucie Planning Department 1999				

\* The zoning designation under mixed use is not necessarily commercial or industrial. In St. Lucie County the majority of designated mixed use areas are agricultural zoning districts.

Depending on their individual requirements, businesses may find that their immediate needs for property can be met in areas already developed for commercial or industrial activities. St. Lucie County currently has eight such developments. The description provided below includes information such as the availability of central utilities. This information is provided to give some indication of the development potential within each of the parks.

#### 1. AIRPORT INDUSTRIAL PARK

Unincorporated St. Lucie County. Contains 180 acres, zoned light industrial, located just east of the St. Lucie County International Airport. Available utilities include FPUA water and electric service, and natural gas service. St. Lucie County Utilities is in the process of extending its central sewer service lines to the Airport Industrial Park. The project is divided into 118 lots, approximately 1.25 acres each. The project is approximately 85 percent built out. Only a few undeveloped lots are contiguous to another. Nine undeveloped contiguous lots owned by the county are located along Industrial Ave One, which has to be constructed prior to utilization of these lots. Included in the Foreign Trade Zone. St. Lucie County is planning expansion of industrial development at the airport through the potential development of an Airport Industrial Park West and an Airport Industrial Park North.

#### 2. KINGS HIGHWAY INDUSTRIAL PARK

Unincorporated St. Lucie County. Contains 100 acres, zoned light industrial, located west of Ft. Pierce at the intersection of Angle Road and Kings Highway. Available utilities include FPUA water, sewer, natural gas and electric services. The project is composed of 97 lots, approximately 0.75 to 1.5 acres each. The project is approximately 75 percent built out and included in the Foreign Trade Zone.

#### 3. FT. PIERCE BUSINESS PARK

Unincorporated St. Lucie County. Contains approximately 42 acres, zoned heavy industrial, located on Selvitz Road. Available utilities include FPUA water and electric services. Rail siting is available. Sewage disposal is by septic tank, which limits the development potential of undeveloped parcels. The project contains 20 lots, approximately 2 acres each and to date only six lots are developed.

4. CROSSROADS PARK OF COMMERCE

City of Ft. Pierce. Contains 209 acres, zoned Commercial. The project is located between the Florida Turnpike and I-95, and south of SR 70 (Okeechobee Road). Available utilities include FPUA water, sewer and electricity. The project currently contains 22 lots, approximately 1 to 7.3 acres in size and to date only four of the lots have been developed. In addition, there is an 85 acre unplatted property to the south of the existing park.

5. RESERVE COMMERCE CENTER

City of Port St. Lucie. Contains approximately 228 acres, zoned industrial, commercial and institutional, located in the northwest corner of Port St. Lucie at the intersection of Midway Road and Glades-Cut Off Road. Available utilities include central water and sewer service by the Reserve Utility Corporation. Rail siting is available. The project contains 34 lots, approximately 2-4 acres in size, includes 126 acres of undeveloped property and to date only seven lots are developed.

6. ST. LUCIE WEST COMMERCE PARK

City of Port St. Lucie. A well-established industrial park, which contains approximately 440 acres, zoned light industrial and commercial, located adjacent to I-95, just north of St. Lucie West Boulevard. Available utilities include water and sewer service by the St. Lucie West Utility Corporation, and natural gas service. Parcels available from 1/3 acre to 200 acres and included in the Foreign Trade Zone.

7. ST. LUCIE BUSINESS PARK

Unincorporated St. Lucie County. Contains 23 acres, zoned commercial and light industrial, located at US#1 and Business Park Drive, one mile south of Prima Vista Boulevard. All services are available. The project contains 13 lots in total with only a few lots available.

8. PORT ST. LUCIE INDUSTRIAL PARK

City of Port St. Lucie. Contains 50 acres, zoned light industrial, located off US#1 in Port St. Lucie. Utilities include central water and sewer. The project contains 48 lots, approximately one to two acres in size and about 55 percent of the project is developed.

In addition to commercial and industrial subdivisions, St. Lucie County also contains several major industrial and commercial districts. The City of Ft. Pierce also includes several industrial and commercial districts, including the Port of Ft. Pierce, the railroad switching yard, and the County's only true downtown commercial district. The City of Port St. Lucie lacks a central business and entertainment district, but instead, relies on separate commercial centers.

## **IMPORTANT ECONOMIC ISSUES**

### **A. AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, FISHING**

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Agriculture is still an important factor in St. Lucie County's economy. These activities typically have large land area requirements, and are mostly found in rural areas, where there is less competition for land and hence lower land costs. In St. Lucie County, these activities are primarily located within the western unincorporated areas of the county. There are however some activities such as fruit packing facilities that require a more urban infrastructure and are found closer to I-95 or the Turnpike. The agricultural industry in 1998 accounted for about 10.7 percent of the total jobs in St. Lucie County (see Table 12-3). By comparison, this division accounts for only 2.74 percent of the total jobs in the State. The leading agricultural activities in St. Lucie County generally provide lower paying, labor intensive, and seasonal employment. According to the Florida Department of Labor and Employment Security, crop production, crop services and farm labor and management in St. Lucie County paid an average of \$13,912 per year. The median income for migrant workers is estimated to be much lower. The seasonal nature of employment in the agricultural sector is reflected in St. Lucie County's monthly fluctuations in unemployment as well as its relatively high annual rates of unemployment.

A promising recent development in the local agricultural sector was the relocation of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Research Lab to St. Lucie County from Orlando. As part of these plans, a 150,000 square foot research building has been completed at Picos Road and Rock Road. The facility will employ about 100 researchers and office workers. An adjacent 640 acres will be used for growing crops for educational and experimental purposes.

The University of Florida through its Institute for Food and Agricultural Science (IFAS), Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution, the Florida Atlantic University, and Indian River Community College are also in the process of establishing aquaculture as a specialized form of agriculture in St. Lucie County. Aquaculture is more and more perceived as the "Farm of the Future" and may present an alternative to the traditional cattle rancher or citrus grower for diversification in the future.

As a result of the concentration of so many nationally and internationally recognized research and development and educational institutions, including the University of Florida, Florida Atlantic University, Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution, Smithsonian Institute, USDA, and many others, St. Lucie County has developed a reputation as a center for research and development, and is actively promoting the further development of the county as a research and development cluster.

## **B. MANUFACTURING**

Manufacturing industries comprise the smallest of the four employment divisions of St. Lucie County's economy. Compared to the state, manufacturing industries within St. Lucie County have had little impact in terms of employment and earnings. Only about 5.3 percent of county jobs are in the manufacturing sector (see Table 12-3). These industries are viewed as desirable because they are usually high value-added activities that possess great potential in creating higher paying jobs that provide an overall diversification in the economy. According to a 1998 survey, a majority (approximately 73 percent) of the manufacturers in St. Lucie County had fewer than 20 employees and only about 5 percent had over 100 employees. This employment structure works to reduce shocks caused by economic changes like those experienced in areas that rely on a few large employers.

## **C. TOURISM**

Tourism provides strong support to St. Lucie County's economy. There are two basic types of tourism - active and passive. Each type has different impacts on the economy. In general, active tourism requires a higher level of service, and therefore creates a higher amount of employment per tourist. Private interests generally provide active recreation facilities and are revenue producing. Common examples include golfing, fishing tournaments, boat charters, and eco-heritage tourism tours. Sports and recreation facilities act as an additional tourist attraction for an area. St. Lucie County offers many top quality golf courses and the relocation of the Professional Golfers' Association (PGA) to the county offers the opportunity to expand on the areas attractiveness and quality of life to golfing tourists. According to the "Destination: Florida Golf" magazine, golf travel continues to be a growing component of the golf industry. Golf tourism increased 50 percent from 1989 to 1998, with 12 million golf travelers in the US in 1998. Also in 1998, 3.53 million golfers traveled to Florida and spent \$3.92 billion, excluding green fees and golf equipment purchases

and rentals (1998 National Golf Foundation Study of the US Golf Travel Market). These golf travelers accounted for 6.36 million hotel room nights.

Major league spring training games and regular season minor league games held at the St. Lucie County Sports Complex attract many avid fans. Combination tour offers such as ■Fly & Golf• or ■Fly & Fish•, in cooperation with the St. Lucie County Airport, would attract many recreational pilots and their families and friends. Opportunities for passive recreation in St. Lucie County include its 21 miles of unspoiled and uncrowded beaches along North and South Hutchinson Island; the Indian River Lagoon, a unique estuarine habitat where tropical ocean waters meet temperate zone waters and are recognized for its biological diversity and marine life; and the St. Lucie River.

The seasonal pattern of tourism, however, creates a gap of low economic activity during the summer months. To close this gap, there is a need to expand the tourist season, and capture a larger share of the international market.

#### **D. ECOTOURISM, HERITAGE, AND CULTURAL TOURISM**

This form of tourism represents an emerging and rapidly expanding tourist market in Florida. Successful protection, development and promotion of natural environment, historical elements, and the quality of life in an area can improve the economic viability of a community. Eco-heritage tourism involves direct-guided experience of the natural environment or historical elements, and education about natural & historical resources, without threatening the environment. St. Lucie County contains large areas of pristine natural habitats & historical sites that could provide ideal settings for establishing ecotourism operations. Encouraging the development of this market with private/public partnerships in activities such as backpacking, bird watching, horseback riding, canoeing, camping, and fishing will help expand the tourist season and reduce the seasonal unemployment gap. The ■Ecotourism/Heritage Tourism Advisory Committee Report•, Sept. 18, 1997, provided the following statistics:

- < 165.3 million people traveled as heritage tourists in the United States in 1995.
- < The top two favorite family vacations were visits to the ocean/beaches (41%) and historic sites (40%).
- < The 32-mile Pinellas Trail attracts approximately 1.1 million out-of-area visitors a year.
- < Visitors to the 16-mile St. Marks Trail grew by 103,000 to 224,000 in 1995.
- < Seventy canoe liveries in Florida generate \$38.5 million per year. For every \$1.00 paid to canoe outfitters, customers spend \$5.00 for other trip related expenditures such as gas, food, and lodging.
- < Florida is the second ranked state in the nation with \$447 million in retail sales generated by bird watching.

#### **E. WHOLESALE TRADE**

Wholesale trade is a relatively minor activity in St. Lucie County and in 1998 accounted for 3.9 percent of total employment (see Table 12-3). Despite the relatively minor role of wholesale trade, jobs in this sub-sector have increased by 52 percent between 1981 and 1992. This large, continuing increase of the wholesale/distribution sector in the county can be explained by the tremendous population growth as well as the favorable interrelationship between transportation systems, mainly I-95 and the Florida Turnpike.

**F. RETAIL TRADE**

Over 20 percent of the total jobs in St. Lucie County are in retail trade (see Table 12-3). Rapid population growth is the reason for the demand in retail jobs, largely fueled by the single-family residential growth in the City of Port St. Lucie. The more regional markets of Martin County and Indian River County have also benefitted from St. Lucie County's population growth. The attractiveness of these retail markets can be attributed to the availability of more products and the proximity of Port St. Lucie to these regional markets. The tendency of St. Lucie County residents to patronize these markets is exacerbated by the lack of a centralized commercial shopping district in Port St. Lucie, and a consumer preference for newer shopping facilities. The City of Ft. Pierce contains a downtown commercial district which is attracting more and more customers; however, the retail activities in that area are more specialized and serve more of a local market, and do not offer the variety of products and newness preferred by consumers.

**G. CONSTRUCTION**

The construction sector in St. Lucie County comprises 5.6 percent of total employment (see Table 12- 3). This share has grown by one percent since 1992. The rapid population growth and its need for additional housing and infrastructure explain this increase. Building permit activities for St. Lucie County are provided in the Table 12- 5 below.

The future performance of this sector will be affected by long-term trends in population, income, availability and interest of loans, and to some extent the funding of public works projects.

<b>TABLE 12-5 Building Permit Activities for St. Lucie County 1995 - 1998*</b>						
<b>Year</b>	<b>Total # of Building Permits</b>	<b>Total Value Building Permits (\$)</b>	<b># of Single Family Residential Building Permits</b>	<b># of Multi- Family Building Permits</b>	<b># of Mobile Home/RV Building Permits</b>	<b># Non-Residential. Building Permits</b>
1995	542	58,838,647	348	3	139	48
1996	587	65,827,362	403	19	117	48
1997	586	61,901,144	367	11	157	51
1998	514	59,321,885	350	14	109	41

Source: St. Lucie County Building & Zoning Department 1998

\* *This table shows primary building permits issued only. This table does not include permits for accessory structures such as pools, screens, decks, etc, and does not include any of the electric, mechanical, gas or roof sub-permits. The total number of permits issued for any of the above years and the respective value is therefore higher than shown.*

**H. SERVICES**

Services sector employment accounts for a total of 48.5 percent of the jobs in St. Lucie County (see Table 12-3). The services sector is divided into three divisions:

- 1) Finance, Insurance, Real Estate (FIRE) with 4.6 percent;
- 2) Commercial and Professional Services with 25.1 percent; and
- 3) Public Administration Services with 18.8 percent.

In contrast to the other major economic divisions and sectors which are more closely associated with an area's natural resources and infrastructure, activities within the services sector are more related to an area's demographic character.

**I. DEVELOPING ECONOMIC CLUSTERS**

Clusters of industries form when similar companies locate near other industries that have similar characteristics and require similar types of employees, products, and services, or have a producer/supplier relationship. Marine science related and aquaculture industries are a recognized industry cluster in St. Lucie County. The location and expansion of several new university programs, the United States Department of Agriculture Research Lab, Indian River Community Colleges Health Science Center have created another very attractive industry cluster. Both of these relatively new industry clusters need to be utilized as a sound marketing foundation to attract related industries to the county, such as the Federal Aquaculture Research Lab.

**MARKET ACCESS**

St. Lucie County's location relative to the geographic area of demand of the business community is an important factor in economic development. The individual markets for goods and services vary widely; therefore, the following is limited to a more general discussion of market access.

St. Lucie County's location, at the southeastern portion of a large peninsular state, restricts access throughout much of the United States. The county, however, is strategically located at the northern end of the large South Florida market, and also interacts with Central Florida through its proximity to Orlando. The St. Lucie County Economic Base Study reported that a little more than 79 percent of the State's population - over 10 million people - live within 150 miles of St. Lucie County. The South Florida market is also recognized as the gateway to the Caribbean and Latin America.

At the regional level, St. Lucie County offers the advantage of being located in the center of the Treasure Coast. The combined population of Martin, St. Lucie, and Indian River counties in 1998 was at 409,282 (BEBR 1999). If Okeechobee County is included, the population increases to 444,341. An analysis of market access must not only consider the ability of an area to provide access to a large population, but must also describe the income of that population which influences the disposable income. St. Lucie County's per capita income, the total income divided by the total population, is less than that of the State of Florida, Indian River and Martin counties. The relatively higher per capita income of residents in Martin and Indian River counties helps explain the tendency of businesses to locate in northern Martin County and southern Indian River County.

TABLE 12-6 Per Capita Income on a Place-of-Residence Basis	
Jurisdiction	Per Capita Income 1997

Statewide	\$24,799
St. Lucie County	\$19,606
Martin County	\$36,301
Indian River County	\$34,997

Source: Florida Statistical Abstract 1999, Bureau of Economic & Business Research, University of Florida

## PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

The ability of a community to attract and sustain economic development depends on the quality of the community's infrastructure. Infrastructure includes roadways and bridges, airports, drainage and stormwater facilities, water and wastewater systems, electric generation and transmission systems, natural gas lines, solid waste collection, recycling and disposal facilities, schools, and parks. These facilities are the skeletal structure that supports community life, determines quality of life, and supports economic development. The planning of these facilities should occur in a sustainable manner that promotes the development and redevelopment of existing and/or underutilized land in already developed areas and promotes the development of more compact, mixed-use and more pedestrian oriented developments.

### A. TRANSPORTATION

In 1998, transportation, which includes trucking and warehousing, provided 2,583 jobs or 6.4 percent of the total jobs in St. Lucie County (see Table 12-3).

Roads are the predominant feature of St. Lucie County's transportation network. Interstate 95 and the Florida Turnpike are the primary access ways on which people and goods travel to and from the county and the rest of southeast Florida. In St. Lucie County, these two roadways diverge within a mile of each other. From St. Lucie County, I-95 continues north up the eastern edge of the United States, whereas the Florida Turnpike turns northwest across the State where it connects to Orlando and to Interstate 75. State Road 70 is another important roadway that provides a connection to the western coast of Florida. US Highway #1 is another important north-south roadway that carries mostly local and regional traffic.

The St. Lucie County International Airport is located north of Ft. Pierce. It is a general aviation airport that serves several flight schools, an airplane manufacturer, and several businesses ancillary to airport and flight operations. It serves charter flights to and from the Bahamas, as well as, flights throughout the continental United States. Federal Express and United Parcel Services have flight operations from here. Currently, there are 32 businesses at the airport with a total of approximately 400 employees and an estimated annual payroll of \$5,700,000. The Airport Industrial Park, just to the east of the airport, also benefits from the proximity to the airport and its services. There are 52 businesses at the Airport Industrial Park with a total of 868 employees. The airport and adjacent industrial areas are an important economic engine of the St. Lucie County economy, and improvements to ensure a first class general aviation airport, with ancillary aviation related industry, need to be a focal point of the County's economic development program.

The Port of Ft. Pierce is the region's only deep water port. It is largely undeveloped except for a privately owned cargo operation at the south end of the port. The company operates an export business consisting mostly of citrus, but on occasion accommodates general and other refrigerated cargo. Otherwise the port is used for

the importation of Caribbean and Bahamian fruits and vegetables as well as aragonite and other building materials. The Port of Fort Pierce Charrette was conceptually accepted by the Fort Pierce City Commission and the Board of County Commission in 1996, as a guiding document for the development of the Port; however, it was never officially made part of the Port Master Plan. The Charrette generally limits the definition of the Port to the 87 undeveloped acres of the Port and divides this vacant area into three zones: cargo in the southern third, commercial tourism and recreation activities in the northern third, and a flex zone in the middle third. Currently, the majority of the property is privately owned. Any development of the Port will need to take into consideration the sensitivity of the Indian River Lagoon and the revitalization efforts for downtown Fort Pierce. The county is pursuing the update of the existing Port Master Plan with an anticipated completion date of December 2001.

In addition to the facilities discussed above, interstate bus service is available locally. Rail cargo service by FEC and CSX is available. The FEC main line runs along the Coastal Ridge in eastern St. Lucie County. South of Ft. Pierce, a secondary route, providing access to the CSX railroad system, runs through the southwest part of the city. The railroad provides access to several important commercial and industrial areas, primarily within the unincorporated county and the City of Ft. Pierce. AMTRAK is planning to provide passenger rail service along the east coast, with a proposed station in Ft. Pierce. An extension of Tri-Rail from West Palm Beach to St. Lucie County is considered a possibility for the future.

Central water and wastewater services are especially critical to economic development, since the ability to connect to these services often determines the types and intensities of development that can be constructed and operated. The high costs of extending lines and constructing additional treatment facilities limits many types of development to locations where central water and wastewater services currently exist, or to areas which will likely receive those services in the near future. These costs, which must be paid prior to completion of construction, represent a significant portion of the start-up expenses associated with a business. The City of Port St. Lucie is currently expanding its utility infrastructure to provide additional opportunities for economic development. St. Lucie County has finalized its Utility Master plan, which outlines the expansion of its utility infrastructure to include such important economic areas as the airport and airport industrial parks.

## **B. LOCAL BUSINESS CLIMATE**

St. Lucie County strives to provide for a climate conducive to conducting business while maintaining its outstanding quality of life. This effort by the county and its municipalities has led to the location of many new companies and expansion of existing companies within the last two years.

## **C. PUBLIC INCENTIVES FOR INVESTMENT**

Incentives are typically considered in the latter stages of the site selection process through which a company proceeds. They become critical in the decision to invest in an area. Incentive programs have become a popular method used to attract companies to relocate or expand. There are extensive incentive programs offered by the State and local governments for attraction and expansion of businesses. Enterprise Florida is an example of a public/private partnership at the state level for the promotion of economic development efforts. Programs include tax exemptions, tax abatement programs, business and employee relocation assistance grants, up-front cash investment, job creation investment vouchers, tax credits, industrial revenue bond financing, utility rate & deposit waivers and reductions. When the incentives are utilized to attract high wage job opportunities from targeted industries for the local community, the use of such incentives should be encouraged.

## **D. TAXES**

Taxes, which are necessary for the provisions of many public services associated with growth, can also negatively influence business investment if they are substantially higher than those of competing markets. A lower millage rate may not always offer a competitive advantage to businesses, particularly in areas where the failure to fund

public services because of lower taxes has an effect on the quality of life.

## **QUALITY OF LIFE**

The Treasure Coast Region enjoys an excellent quality of life. The perception of an area having a good quality of life is critical for many businesses in determining whether to invest in a particular location. Factors influencing the quality of life of a community include natural environment, recreation, culture, education, crime, housing, and health services.

Investments in the natural environment, such as the Indian River Lagoon, recreation, and culture, affect not only the quality of life of an area, but also have an effect by encouraging tourism. Major recreational features in St. Lucie County include almost 25,000 acres of aquatic preserve, 21 linear miles of unspoiled beaches, almost 7,000 acres of public parks, 1 public golf course, and more than 12 private golf courses, most of which are open to non-members. St. Lucie County also offers unique exhibits and museums such as Heathcote Botanical Gardens, Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution, the Smithsonian Institution, the St. Lucie County Historical Museum, the UDT-SEAL Museum, the Manatee Observation Center and the A.E. Bean Backus Gallery. Indian River Community College in Ft. Pierce offers visitors a variety of concerts, lectures, exhibits, and a planetarium.

## **ESTABLISHING LOCATIONS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Priority should be given to renovating existing and creating new locations for economic development and businesses. Land use planning, zoning, infrastructure planning, and fiscal policy should encourage patterns of development that will foster redevelopment and infill of existing commercial and industrial areas, and encourage new areas to form in a way that will increase the number and availability of good locations for economic development. Criteria for good business locations include a good transportation network, dense infrastructure, close proximity to neighborhoods (employees), high density of customers and support businesses, and proximity to cultural, recreational, and educational opportunities.

## **TARGETED INDUSTRIES**

According to previous focus and vision groups and the Strategic Regional Policy Plan, St. Lucie County is targeting the industries listed below as those that need to be encouraged to locate or expand in this area.

- Aerospace/Engineering
- Marine Related Manufacturing incl. Retrofitting, Servicing, and Housing
- BioTech/Medical/Pharmaceutical Industries
- Agriculture/Aquaculture/Food Processing Research and Development
- Electronic Related Industries
- Tourism (including Eco-Heritage Tourism, and regional Sports events)
- Cultural & Arts Industries
- Golf and Recreation Industries
- Transportation Resource Based Development
- International Trade

- High Tech Industries

## **ECONOMIC BENCHMARKS**

In 1995, a Visioning Summit was held by Luke Planning, Inc, as a part of the formulation of Vision St. Lucie, in order to more clearly define the wants and needs of the community in regard to education, quality of life, economic development, infrastructure, and government. From the visioning process, the following benchmarks emerged to measure the progress of economic development in the county through 2010.

- < Increase high tech, such as communications and electronics industries, and manufacturing jobs to ten percent of total jobs.
- < Increase the growth rate of average earnings per job to the highest level of any county in Florida or at least one percent per year.
- < Increase St. Lucie County per capita income to above the U.S. per capita income.

## **CONCLUSION**

The County must work closely with other government agencies, the private sector, and the public to ensure that the directions taken by the County in regard to economic development meet common needs and goals.

The County's role is to create the best possible environment for economic development opportunities that will benefit county residents. The County's business climate should encourage the creation, expansion, retention, and relocation of desirable businesses. This goal can be achieved if the County pursues the following objectives:

- < diversify the economic base county wide;
- < increase the skill level in the available work force;
- < increase availability of higher skilled jobs with higher wages;
- < increase educational opportunities for adult education and higher education;
- < increase the availability of executive style housing to attract high skill and high wage work force;
- < encourage a neighborhood style school system to ensure competitiveness with neighboring counties;
- < ensure that adequate areas of commercial, industrial, and tourist/recreational related parcels and structures exist to meet current and future needs; and
- < provide the proper regulatory and financial incentives to encourage desirable development in those areas.

The County has a variety of means at its disposal to accomplish these objectives. They include but are not limited to:

- < provide infrastructure that will support the location and expansion of industry;
- < consider land use and zoning policies that will encourage business centers and growth centers;
- < develop and implement a competitive incentives program to attract target industries; and
- < explore sources of seed capital and venture capital to provide opportunities for creation, expansion, retention, and relocation of businesses.

### **GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES**

The Goals, Objectives, and Policies that follow this section are intended to expand in detail on the above objectives and means for planning and implementation of sound economic growth in St. Lucie County.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

**GOAL 12.1:** Improve the St. Lucie County economy.

**Objective 12.1.1:** Develop and implement activities designed to improve the overall prosperity of St. Lucie County and its residents.

Policy 12.1.1.1: Attract investors to help diversify the industrial base, broaden the economic tax base and strengthen the job market.

Policy 12.1.1.2: Encourage redevelopment projects that will promote economic development opportunities.

Policy 12.1.1.3: Develop a program for projects in order to encourage investment and assist targeted industries in the approval process.

Policy 12.1.1.4: Place a high priority on infill projects that are consistent with the smart growth policies of St. Lucie County.

Policy 12.1.1.5: Encourage more construction of executive housing stock that will assist in the attraction of higher paying job opportunities.

**GOAL 12.2:** Diversify the year round economy and establish an economic and cultural climate that will allow St. Lucie County to effectively compete in the global economy.

**Objective 12.2.1:** Support efforts to diversify St. Lucie County's economy and to make the county an effective competitor.

Policy 12.2.1.1: Develop an area-wide land use plan that will increase opportunities for business and industry consistent with smart growth principles.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

Policy 12.2.1.2	Recruit businesses from the target industry sectors that will provide year-round employment opportunities.
Policy 12.2.1.3	Identify locations for and encourage development of economic clusters for business and industry that would benefit from being located near related industries in the area.
Policy 12.2.1.4	Encourage the development of clusters of industries such as aerospace, aquaculture, research and development at appropriate locations in St. Lucie County.
Policy 12.2.1.5	Prepare and maintain an inventory of incentives, business programs, and housing stock, and available sites to accommodate new businesses and business expansions in St. Lucie County.
Policy 12.2.1.6	Support public/private partnerships and communications and provide for an atmosphere for international trade and tourism to occur.
Policy 12.2.1.7	Assist in the promotion, development and implementation of Foreign Trade Zone services in St. Lucie County.
<b>Objective 12.2.2</b>	<b>Establish procedures and tools to encourage business development and assist economic development in St. Lucie County.</b>
Policy 12.2.2.1	Establish a point person or inter-agency and inter department permitting team whose purpose is to facilitate the movement of targeted economic development projects through the regulatory process.
Policy 12.2.2.2	Establish a toolbox to assist developers and businesses in locating appropriate facilities for their needs and to provide all necessary statistical information to encourage outside investors to locate in St. Lucie County.
Policy 12.2.2.3	Promote and encourage the implementation of the Treasure Coast and the St. Lucie County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs)

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT  
GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES**

<b>Objective 12.2.3</b>	<b>Encourage the provision of appropriate educational opportunities, programs, and facilities to meet business and industry needs.</b>
Policy 12.2.3.1	Encourage the development of more vocational programs to meet business and industry needs.
Policy 12.2.3.2	Encourage the cultivation of education/business partnerships to develop education and training support programs that will benefit businesses and employees.
Policy 12.2.3.3	Encourage education and training programs that encourage high-tech, and research and development businesses and industry to locate in St. Lucie County.
Policy 12.2.3.4	Encourage and support research and development opportunities provided by Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution, USDA laboratory, IFAS, Smithsonian Institute, FAU, and University of Florida, to encourage and enhance clustering of high tech industry, and to support the expansion of manufacturing, agriculture/aquaculture, marine and tourism industries in St. Lucie County.
<b>Objective 12.2.4</b>	<b>Assist the agency charged with the marketing and promotion of St. Lucie County in the development and implementation of marketing efforts.</b>
Policy 12.2.4.1	Assist in marketing St. Lucie County as a location with opportunities for business location, relocation, or expansion, including international trade.
Policy 12.2.4.2	Increase cooperation between public agencies and private organizations to present a unified positive image of St. Lucie County.
Policy 12.2.4.3	Encourage the provision of executive style housing to attract companies which employ high skill, high wage workers.
<b>GOAL 12.3</b>	<b>Expand agricultural activities, and maintain a sufficient agricultural land base to increase the sustainability, expansion, and diversification of agricultural</b>

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

activities throughout St. Lucie County.

**Objective 12.3.1**      **Increase and diversify the agricultural economic base**

Policy 12.3.1.1      Develop specialty foods, farmers market products, and food processing industries to increase and diversify the agricultural economic base.

Policy 12.3.1.2      Encourage, maintain, and expand industries, such as the equine industry and aquaculture industry, to increase and diversify the agricultural economic base.

Policy 12.3.1.3      Encourage and support agricultural and aquaculture research and education programs and development activities.

**GOAL 12.4**      **Maintain and expand the tourism sector of St. Lucie County's economy.**

**Objective 12.4.1**      **Maintain and improve existing features that contribute to the attraction of tourists.**

Policy 12.4.1.1      Protect St. Lucie County's natural resources and countryside to ensure their continued existence for the benefit and enjoyment of future residents and visitors.

Policy 12.4.1.2      Protect and reuse St. Lucie County's historic sites and buildings to preserve its heritage, promote economic development, enhance quality of life, and add to the tourist experience.

Policy 12.4.1.3      Support local initiatives to preserve St. Lucie County's art, architecture, natural and cultural heritage.

**Objective**      **Initiate marketing efforts and seek new opportunities to promote tourism**

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

### 12.4.2

Policy 12.4.2.1 Market St. Lucie County as a vacation destination with, multiple outdoor recreation and natural resources, historic sites, cultural activities and facilities.

Policy 12.4.2.2 Promote cooperative efforts between public agencies and private organizations to present a unified positive image of St. Lucie County.

Policy 12.4.2.3 Develop ecotourism opportunities to help extend the tourist season in St. Lucie County, help sustain large areas of open space, preserve natural habitat, discourage sprawling, low density development, and broaden the economic base.

Policy 12.4.2.4 Promote and market entertainment and sports activities in St. Lucie County domestically and internationally to increase the County's tourism market.

Policy 12.4.2.5 Encourage and strengthen the role of sports activities in the economic development by attracting and soliciting amateur and professional regional multi-sports events, including regional equestrian competitions and sports fishing tournaments, throughout the county.

Policy 12.4.2.6 Encourage and strengthen the role of the arts in economic development by attracting and accommodating amateur and professional arts events and businesses throughout the county.

**GOAL 12.5 Encourage patterns of development that are less costly to provide with public services and facilities, and encourage the redevelopment and revitalization of older residential, industrial, and commercial areas.**

**Objective 12.5.1 Promote patterns of development that allow public services and facilities to be provided more cost-effectively.**

Policy 12.5.1.1 Encourage the use of compact, mixed-use development.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

Policy  
12.5.1.2 Coordinate land use planning and the provision of public facilities.

Policy  
12.5.1.3 Simplify and shorten the review and approval process while ensuring that the public health, safety, and welfare are not compromised.

Policy  
12.5.1.4 Develop and utilize appropriate business incentive programs that will attract outside businesses and assist in the retention and expansion of existing businesses.

### **GOAL 12.6 Improve infrastructure linkages throughout St. Lucie County.**

**Objective  
12.6.1** Encourage and support improved infrastructure linkages between business centers, educational facilities, and residents.

Policy  
12.6.1.1 Improve transportation opportunities throughout St. Lucie County in order to provide improved access to industry and commercial locations for other businesses and the labor force, and provide easier access to educational facilities.

Policy  
12.6.1.2 Improve and expand the water and sewer system to allow for adequate capacity for future economic growth.

Policy  
12.6.1.3 Expand the water and sewer system to encompass all industrial and commercial land use areas located within the urban service area and utilize grant funds when available.

Policy  
12.6.1.4 Encourage and improve the use of the St. Lucie County International Airport as a first class general aviation facility, to improve safety for existing and new flight training facilities, to improve access for business and industry, to improve access for residents, and to encourage outside investors to locate in the area.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT  
GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES**

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## **EXHIBIT A**

### **VISION ST. LUCIE**

(On file in the Department of Growth Management)

